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The Eternal Pledge of Progress

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A SERMON

GEORGE A. GORDON

THE OLD SOUTH CHURCH
BOSTON

The Eternal Pledge of Progress

A SERMON

PREACHED AT THE

OLD SOUTH CHURCH, BOSTON

SUNDAY MORNING, APRIL 30, 1899

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BY THE

REV. GEORGE A. GORDON, D. D.

TOGETHER WITH

THE ACTION OF THE CHURCH IN SETTING ASIDE
THE WESTMINSTER CONFESSION OF FAITH

BOSTON, 1899

Rev. Geo. A. Gordon,
July 10, 1899.

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THIS SERMON

WHICH SPEAKS OF THINGS

THAT ARE SHAKEN

IS AFFECTIONATELY DEDICATED

TO THE PEOPLE OF THE OLD SOUTH CHURCH

IN THE NAME OF THE FAITH THAT

CANNOT BE SHAKEN

THE ETERNAL PLEDGE OF PROGRESS

"And he that sitteth upon the throne said, Behold, I make all things new." — Rev. xxi. 5.

God is the great innovator. It is he that makes all things new. Change, when it is from glory to glory, has behind it the decree of the Eternal. The origin and goal of the unfolding universe is in the purpose of the Infinite. History dates from the Divine will. The drama of human existence moves toward issues that God has defined; and for all true progress he is the supreme sanction, the final and inviolable pledge.

Such would seem to be the meaning of the text. There is in the universe an eternal throne; in the centres of being there is an authority that overrides all other authorities. The throne is the throne of the living God, and the authority is the expression of his righteous will. Below the heaving and changing life of men, and nations, and races the voice speaks: "Behold, I make all things new." As man outgrows himself, leaves his best achievement behind, and climbs upon his dead past, as upon stepping-stones, to higher things, he

is both a type and an expression of God. He outgrows his past by the power of God, and therefore the growing man is an expression of God. He renders infancy obsolete by childhood, childhood by youth, youth by maturity, maturity by the ineffable homeward sigh of the final Christian mood; and again, in this way of superseding the past, the true man is a type of God. From the manger to the cross, Christ goes in the strength of God; he is thus the supreme expression of God. But perfect as they are of their kind, all previous utterances of love are superseded by the final utterance upon the cross; Christ is therefore the supreme type of God.

Progress is thus by divine authority; it is by divine decree; it is by divine necessity. So long as God's purpose in Christ remains unovertaken, the new insight and the new love must register an advance upon the old. It has pleased God to move to his goal through development; it has pleased him thus to perfect his work. It is the ever mightier coming of the Holy Spirit in the mind of the church that renders the past obsolete. Again it must be said that God is the great innovator; it is he that discredits the thoughts of men about his kingdom; it is he that supersedes the old by the new.

This divine progress may be conceived as taking places in four ways. The world changes while

the beholder remains the same. That illustrates one way. Nature breaks from the grip of winter; the wonder of spring takes place before the eyes that but yesterday were looking upon desolate fields and seemingly lifeless trees; the glory of summer completes the transformation. The spectator is the same, but the spectacle is richly and miraculously new. The kingdom of God changes before the vision of the student. The Exodus in the light of the Lord's supper, the emancipation in which a race begins to live politically, has a new meaning when taken up into the experience from which the emancipation of mankind is dated. Pentecost grows into an imperial church; the gospel becomes a gospel for humanity. God's ideal in Christ grows upon the beholder. At first it is a brook issuing eastward from the sanctuary; then it is ankle deep, then it is to the loins, and finally it is a river to swim in, and everything liveth whithersoever the river cometh. The sublimest expansion known to man is the expansion of the kingdom of God, the expansion of the Divine purpose in Christ that has providentially taken place before the eyes of the serious and devout beholders of to-day.

But the beholder may change while the world remains the same. In vain are sightless eyes turned upon the sweet approach of even or morn. For the deaf ear there is no jubilee in the sum-

mer woods. For the unreceptive senses, the total glory of the sensuous side of things is lost. The cosmos burns in sunrise and sunset, but there is no beholding eye; it breaks into song, but there is no answer; it extends and varies and multiplies its appeal, but there is no response. Now the miracle is repeated, let us say, and the new man goes out into the old world. That takes place whenever the carnal man becomes the spiritual man. For Paul, for Augustine, for Luther, in a true sense for Carlyle and Emerson, and for every man who comes into the consciousness of his humanity, Christianity becomes new through personal change. This is the perennial meaning of regeneration. The man who is of the earth earthy comes to bear the image of the heavenly; the life that has drawn its motives from below now draws them from above; the existence that was but an animal has become a man, and a conscious son of God. Out into the old world this new man in Christ Jesus walks; and his exclamation is the ancient one, "Old things are passed away, all things have become new." The dead soul has become receptive; it has new vision for the beauty of the Lord our God, it has an open ear for his speech and praise in which all things join, it has verified the assertion, "O taste and see that the Lord is good." The divine wonder is the same; it is the beholder that has changed.

The world may appear new because of a better medium. The mountains wait for the perfect day that they may draw near the beholder, that they may stand up over him, that they may reveal all the deep lines and strong marks of their great faces. The Syrian sky alone is the perfect medium for the starry host. Until one stands under his sky, one can never hope to see what Job saw when he spoke of Orion and the Pleiades, of Arcturus and her suns. And in the same way the new and better medium makes new the eternal Gospel. The Lord's Prayer is one thing to the child at its mother's knee; read through the discipline of the years, and repeated in the twilight between the fading light and the final darkness it is another. Seen through "memory's sunset air" the Beatitudes and the Parables stand in a new transfiguration. The nativity of our Lord is forever understood best by the aged saints. His temptation becomes real and its meaning wide as human history only with the advent of moral struggle. His ministry of mercy is most divine to the heart that is oldest in pity and tears. His cross, as the form upon which the universe is built, is gradually unveiled to the loving soul, and for the oldest and purest lover the supreme vision is reserved. His resurrection becomes divinely beautiful as life is bereaved, and as it begins to feel the strange chill through which death works,

the touch of decay that needs the great resurrection contradiction of it, to stop its lying tongue. Thus God looks through the cloud in the first watch, in the second watch, in the third watch, in the fourth watch, of the dark journey of man; and in each watch the face of the Eternal is new because the light that rests upon it is new.

But the cosmos itself, with its entire content, may be conceived as becoming new. This is the evolutionary conception. The beginnings were everywhere a day of small things. The stellar universe was not always as it is to-day. It has a wondrous history, and that history is still incomplete. The cosmos is driving toward a goal; and human history is setting like a mighty tide toward great issues. The pile is not complete. Nature and man are both heirs of the future. The environment is changing, and man is changing; we cannot forecast the result, but we can believe that the perfecter of man is the perfecter of nature. For this revelation of the ultimate character of each, and for this reconciliation of each to the other when both are at their best, we wait in hope. Meanwhile we can see that our human world is the chariot of the Lord ; that on one side, the wheels are nature, and on the other humanity; that the wheels are all rolling forward upon some far-off divine event, and the glory of the ongoing is in the God who initiates it, who directs it to his

own ends, and who fills it even in the dust and heat of the day with the joy of his presence.

The question now comes, to which of these four modes of change does the current form of Christian faith belong? Has Christianity really changed? Or is the change in the student of it only? Or is the modern world with its science and its cosmopolitan culture and interests but a new and finer atmosphere for the appreciation of an everlasting brightness? Or is Christianity a divine ideal, to be completely revealed only in the history of mankind, and therefore the highest aspect of the universal purpose of God, which he is disclosing and realizing through the entire movement of the cosmos? The answer would seem to be that Christian faith changes in all these ways. The gospel grows; it was a seed, it has become a tree. The serious student of it becomes a new man, and to him it becomes a new thing. The experience of life is the wondrous atmosphere through which the glory increases; and the whole changing cosmos carries forward into fuller disclosure and triumph the purpose of God in Christ. The current change of Christian faith is part of human history; it is in the order of nature; it is the inevitable result of God's presence in his growing world; it is to be regarded solemnly and thankfully as the witness of the richer advent of the Holy Spirit in the intelligence and heart of the church.

In 1680, eleven years after its foundation, this church adopted, as the test of admission into its membership and as a measure of the qualification of all its ministers as to doctrinal belief down to 1884, the Westminster Confession of Faith. That Confession is perhaps the best Calvinistic creed in existence. It was the product of an assembly of divines appointed by the famous Long Parliament for the reformation of the Church of England. The Assembly included Episcopalians, Presbyterians, Independents, and those whose contention was that the church was part of the state, and therefore properly under civil authority. Opinions differ concerning the average ability of the Assembly. Clarendon and Milton rate that ability low; Baxter and Hallam rate it high. All admit that the leading spirits were men of commanding talents and character. Among the one hundred and fifty-one members, there were doubtless a considerable number of whom it could be said, as was said of Thomas Coleman, "half scholar, half fool." The Assembly held over eleven hundred sessions, and in the seven hundred and fifty-second they sent to Parliament the completed Confession which they styled a Humble Advice. The Confession was the work of the English Puritan aided and abetted by the Scotch Presbyterian. It was published in 1647, and after the death of Cromwell, and the restoration of Charles II. it

had to flee for its life. The work chiefly of the English Puritan, the Confession has found the sphere of its influence in Scotland and America. Published in 1647 in England, it was adopted by "a synod of elders and messengers of the churches in Boston" in 1680; that is, twenty years after it had expired in the community where it originated. It is still the disregarded but unrepudiated creed of the Presbyterian churches of Scotland and America. It was the creed of the Old South Church for two hundred and nineteen years. As a test of membership, it has been disregarded since 1836. It was formally set aside by vote of the church on Friday evening, April 28, 1899.

This vote of the church is not the indication of a new resolution to go on to better things. It is simply the registration of the advance that has been achieved. The dial of the clock registers the progress of the hours, and this vote of the Old South Church is an ecclesiastical dial. The Church recognizes all time as the great and terrible day of the Lord; and first by its love, and second by its faith, and last by its vote, it seeks to register God's increasing glory. It was said of Lord Loudoun that he was like St. George on the signs, "always on horseback and never rides on." For many centuries that has been the condition of theology. It has been slow to admit

new light. It has been loath to rise out of the dust and shake itself, and to put on its beautiful garments. And even when it has promised progress — as in the wilderness discussions over natural and moral ability and inability, and the huge and useless legal mechanism into which the sublime Christian idea of Reconciliation was bent and battered — it has been like St. George on the signs, "always on horseback and never rides on." That hour of indecision has gone. The churches have moved forward. They have moved so far that no sane disciple of Christ can read the gospel and say that the Westminster Confession is a true interpretation of it. No person in this church can read it, and say that it answers to the love of God in his heart.

Nevertheless, the Westminster Confession is a great and venerable symbol. It stands in a deathless association with great minds, strong wills, ruling and progressive careers. It is the bony skeleton which the devout imagination will reinvest with the flesh and blood and brain and heart of many generations of those who must ever be numbered among the noblest of mankind. Under the tissues of Puritan character and service, warm, winning, commanding, with the red blood of a passionate love of righteousness, thus invested and thus consecrated, the creed that to-day is the mere articulation of dry bones was the power that

shook the world. We do not look into the tomb to find Cromwell and Milton; Alexander and Cæsar are not accounted for by their ashes; the cemetery with its decorated graves is not the true symbol of that mighty host of American youth who went forth to save the nation in its day of peril. The spirit is the man; and the Christian spirit that for generations used the old creed is the essential and everlasting honor of the Puritan. We seek to perpetuate the Puritan spirit in the new body of faith which it has pleased the Lord to give to our time.

The fact must never be forgotten that Puritanism was a sublime ethical idealism. It held that the soul, the family, the civil community, and the brotherhood of believers were so many spheres for the realization of the will of God. The poor actual in all these spheres was the lie of existence; the truth was in the will of the Infinite. That divine ideal was over them always. It was the source of their light, their sorrow, their longing, and their despair. It was a world of truth suspended above their world of falsehood; a world of order and peace overhanging their world of confusion and trouble; a world of beauty and of infinite solace to the weary and heavy-laden children of men. Puritanism, under one great aspect of it, was a good thing pushed to an intolerable extreme. Through the high rigor and noble ex-

travagance of its thought it made the kingdom of God inaccessible. It was this moral inaccessibility of the divine world that finally overthrew Puritanism. It was too much for human nature to bear, to continue to exalt God so high and to sink man to such abysses. To be willing to be damned for the glory of God is more than man is equal to; that is moral idealism pushed beyond sane limits. When God has become everything and man nothing, whether it be in Calvinism or in Spinozism, revolt from the annihilating extreme is sure to come; when God's glory is conceived to be something that thrives at the expense of man's essential happiness, the charge of dynamite has been laid alike in the heart of the theology and the philosophy. By the excess of its idealism, by its wild moral nobility, Puritanism came to its end. While we cannot but be thankful that it has passed away, we are bound to note the sublime aspiration that inspired it, and, if we can, to conserve that aspiration in a saner and mightier way.

Nowhere is this idealism of the Puritan better shown than in an incident in the uniformly pleasant relations of Franklin and Whitefield. Franklin had cordially invited Whitefield to be his guest on one of his visits to Philadelphia. Whitefield replied that if he had made that offer of hospitality for Christ's sake he should not lose

his reward. Franklin's answer was that it was not for Christ's sake, but for Whitefield's sake that he had invited him to his home. There is the Puritan who wanted every act of courtesy and friendship to be filled with the sense of the Eternal Friend and the eternal order of friendship; who wanted Franklin's motive to be love to the imperfect disciple in the name of the perfect Master. The poor actual is not worthy of Franklin's kindness; to give complete meaning to the act it must be filled with the love of the ideal. Franklin's humanity is not inconsistent with Whitefield's Christology; indeed, the wise and benign humanist is the necessary complement to the lofty but narrow Puritan. Still, Franklin's remark is on the dead level of a merely earthly wisdom. It is devoid of imagination, without insight into the poetry of truth, and infinitely beneath the dignity and passion of Puritan idealism.

It must be added, however, that Puritanism can no longer live in the flesh. If it is to survive it must be in the spirit. Literal Puritanism has no longer any vital relation to the educated mind. Indeed, it has become a mystery how able and good men could ever have believed in the Westminster or Calvinistic system. The meaning of the symbol and the system turns upon the conception of God's relation to mankind. And the

Confession declares that "by the decree of God, for the manifestation of his glory, some men and angels are predestinated unto everlasting life, and others foreordained to everlasting death." How could they write such words with the great gospel announcement ringing in their ears: "God so loved the world that he gave his only-begotten son, that whosoever believeth on him should not perish, but have eternal life"? How could they reproduce the Hebrew notion that God is the author of both the light and the darkness of human existence, in the face of the fundamental Christian idea that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all? Where was their Christianity when they traced the two streams of the salvation and perdition of men back to the will of the Most High? Where was their sense of justice and their humanity when they framed beliefs that contradict the conscience and heart of mankind?

The answer to these questions is here indicated, not primarily in criticism of great and good men who struggled bravely to live up to their best light, but chiefly in solemn warning to their descendants, for whom, should they continue to repeat the terrible blasphemy, there can be no valid excuse. Veneration for heroic characters and noble services in the past is entirely consistent with confidence in the better faith into which

the church is to-day coming. In repeating the wisdom of the fathers, the children are under bonds not to repeat the folly. The best tribute one can render to the faithful who have preceded one is to comprehend their best thought in the larger truth of the new time. They without us were not made perfect; we in turn wait for the fulfillment of our faith in the great future.

To the Puritan the world was an utter mystery. He did not know upon what philosophical principle to get at its meaning, and he did not have the courage of his ignorance. If the Puritan had only had the courage to say that he did not know! The world is still a puzzle; it is still heavy with mystery. Many who abjure the old theology are afraid of the full comfort of the new. They do not know; no one knows; the wisest has but reasoned belief. Professor Sophocles, of Harvard, used to ask his class, What became of the Greeks who fell at Thermopylæ? To the student who replied that their bodies were burned by the Persians, he said scornfully, No, next. To the answer that they were recovered and carried away by their friends, he said again, and with equal scorn, No, next. To the person who confessed that he did not know, the strange old teacher would say with a smile, "You are right; no one knows." Reasoned belief is the best attainable upon these high things. Let

the bewildered Christian take refuge in his ignorance. If he feels like rejecting the old thought of God's relation to mankind, and still cannot surrender himself to the new because he does not know enough, let him hold on bravely to the comfort of his ignorance. In the name of his human heart, in the name of Christ's love, and in the name of his ignorance, let him refuse to repeat the Calvinistic blasphemy. Let him declare with Whittier: —

> "The wrong that pains my soul below
> I dare not throne above."

Agnosticism upon the final mysteries of the universe is infinitely better than opinions that arraign the righteousness of the Most High.

But where did these good men get their idea of predestination? They got it from the Bible; and finding it there, they felt in duty bound to accept it as true. The Westminster divines were required by Parliament to cite scriptural proof for every belief that they framed. For their belief in the decree of salvation and reprobation they cited passages in Romans, Ephesians, Timothy, Proverbs, Peter, Thessalonians, Matthew, and John. Their interpretation is often in error, and the thoughts of the New Testament writers are by no means always responsible for the construction put upon their words. But that the West-

minster divines were right in finding double predestination in the Bible, two instances are sufficient proof. In the book of Acts the death of Jesus is said to be by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God; and the wickedness of Pharaoh is accounted for in Romans as the issue of the Divine hardening. "So then he hath mercy on whom he will, and whom he will he hardeneth." An erroneous doctrine of Scripture compelled them, as logicians, to frame the terrible belief in the Divine decree both of salvation and reprobation. Here was their argument in perfect syllogistic form: Every verse in the Bible is true; there are many verses in the Bible that ascribe to God the decree of reprobation; therefore reprobation is true. The point to be noted is the fallacy of the major premise: Every verse in the Bible is true. That position, so pious in sound, is the tap-root of the whole horror. That all Scripture has equal value for faith is for the Puritan a pardonable position; for the educated Christian of to-day it is a monstrous position. For it necessitates the revolting conclusion. The men who still stand by the inerrancy or infallible authority of all Scripture should stand by the double predestination that goes with it. It is bad logic, loose thinking, incapacity to go to the natural conclusion of an idea that keeps the Calvinist of to-day from the terrible faith of his predecessors.

The lesson here is fundamental. God's love in Christ is the central fact in the New Testament. Christ's mission is to declare God's equal and eternal love for every human being that he has made. The supreme meaning of the Incarnation is the revelation and assurance of the absolute love of God. The words that go against this position, if there are such in the Gospels, cannot be true reports; for our belief is that Jesus cannot contradict himself. The passages in the Epistles that favor reprobation are remnants of alien thought. Christ's chief concern is to declare to the world the Fatherly love of God, and if there are things in the New Testament that contradict this central declaration, we cannot believe that they are a true part of the message of our Lord. The spirit of the really Divine portions of the Old Testament is trust in the Infinite mercy; the spirit of the Epistles is an overwhelming witness to the Eternal pity; the meaning of the Incarnation of Jesus Christ, the significance of his whole teaching, ministry, life and death, and resurrection and ascension, is in the assurance of God's absolute love; and against this consensus of the highest in the Bible all opposing passages must go to the wall. He has but a poor opinion of the Bible who puts everything within it upon the same level. It is impossible to believe that the imprecatory psalms and the Beatitudes came

from the same source. The prayer of the captive Jew in Babylon: "Happy shall he be that taketh and dasheth thy little ones against the rock," and Christ's prayer upon the cross: "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do," cannot be the inspiration of the same spirit. Between books like Joshua and Judges and the writings of the great prophets there is obviously a vast difference in value. The Old Testament is a gradation of spiritual values from the zero of Leviticus to the sublime elevations of second Isaiah. The Old Testament and the New were put by Paul upon wholly different levels. We need to read again his Second Epistle to the Corinthians, and to note that the glory of the Hebrew dispensation is the glory of the transient, while the surpassing glory of the Christian dispensation is the glory of the permanent. The great letter to the Hebrews is the classic example of the way in which, to apostolic thought, the Old Testament was fulfilled in the New and superseded by it. It remains as the surpassing literature of the spirit that has attained final expression in Christ. Nor can one pause here. He has but a superficial insight into the New Testament who regards all its parts as of equal worth. The apostles are to be followed in so far as they followed Christ. The words that should be engraven upon the heart of every student of

the Bible are these: "One is your master, even Christ; and all ye are brethren." I find little, indeed, in the New Testament that runs counter to the spirit of Christ. Our question is mainly one of principle. Who is our Master? Christ or his apostles? Is the final Christian authority in the record, or in the Christ who uses the record, and who uses the reason of the reader? To exalt the book above the Person for whom it is the chief witness, is to invert the truth. The Divine person is the supreme thing; the book is great and precious in so far as it is his witness. The Bible is to be interpreted in accordance with its Christ. All in it that is introductory to or consonant with his career is a true and permanent part of his gospel; whatever in it opposes him cannot claim to be under the inspiration of his God and Father, and it is the God and Father of Christ whom all true Christians worship.

We can perpetuate the great Puritan tradition only in one way. We must refuse to put limits of any kind upon the saving purpose of God. We must assert with the old Puritan the absoluteness of the Divine will, and with the new Puritan we must hold that there is but one predestination, that this predestination is to righteousness, that it is inclusive of every soul that God has made, and that every wicked man, to the full extent of his wickedness, is at cross-pur-

poses with God. We must contend that the soul in its sin is never the expression of the Divine intention, that in so far as it is unrighteous the world is at war with God. The old Puritan put the mystery of iniquity at the door of God's will. It was laid against the Divine character, and no one can measure the power it has had in breaking down man's confidence in the essential goodness of God. The new Puritan refuses to identify the world as it is with the intention of the Infinite. He insists that only the faithful soul is in accord with the decree of the Eternal, and that men, nations, races, in so far as they are consciously unrighteous, are resisting God. One vast chapter of human history is of man's successful resistance of God. To say that much in history is other than a horror to God is to destroy faith in his character. Tiberius, Caligula, Nero, must be infinitely revolting to God. The race in its wantonness has been able temporarily to defy the Absolute love. One must either say this or confess that history as it stands, in all its blood and tears, is the expression of the Divine mind. The faith that would put a temporary limit upon God's power seems to me infinitely better than the belief that would destroy his moral integrity. We can bear the mystery of iniquity if its origin is not in the Divine will; we can wait in hope, and work in joy, if we can believe that the whole movement of

God in Christ is to sweep his universe clean of everything but righteousness. This is the faith that is to take hold of men in the future. It has a power of appeal that no noble nature can resist. It offers a cause that is all divine; it presents an issue to be won by the joint action of God and man, wholly and infinitely good. The moral nature of man needs the appeal of just such a faith, and the faith, when once it awakens the conscience, will have an everlasting and resistless instrument of power. An Eternal will for righteousness, for righteousness in every human being, for righteousness in this world and in all worlds, is the vision that will re-open the fountains of adoration and deathless obedience. We must believe in a God who desires to put his house in order, who will have no compromises with confusion, whose eternal purpose and passion can rest with nothing less than the recovery to righteousness of every soul that he has made. That must be the mood, the attitude, the intention and passion of our God, if in this day we are to believe and serve, as the Puritans did in their day. We need the greater God for the greater world in which we live; we cannot live the life of love and trust unless we honestly believe that God is eternally on the side of every human soul. Lose that faith to-day, and the hand of death is upon the life of the church. The gospel is then no more.

Concerning the Covenant which has been in use for one hundred and thirty years, which has been formally adopted by the church as the adequate and only symbol of its faith and fellowship, and which is a revision of the noble words to which the Founders of Old South put their honored names, several remarks must now be made. Save in the excision of a single sentence, this Covenant stands in the simplicity and majesty of the form in which it was adopted as a service of admission in 1769. It has not been otherwise reduced, either in fullness or in dignity. It remains unchanged; it preserves in its simple majesty words and phrases which were spoken by the Founders of the church, and which have embodied the vows of those who have followed them during seven generations of Christian faith and fellowship. We may well believe that in its present form this venerable and beautiful symbol will last as long as the church itself. We may be assured that if the time should ever come when its life shall cease, the voices of its last members will blend with those of its first, in uttering the same immortal words of belief and communion. And it is because of the history of the Covenant, and its assured future in the love of thousands, that I ask you to note two or three of its great characteristics.

1. The Covenant puts before the mind an

Infinite end. It calls for the confession of "God the Father as our chief good." It acknowledges man's desire for supreme satisfaction. It stands in the noble succession of the great ethical interpretations of human existence. Man is a being of ends. He is forever seeking satisfactions. He is a being who can rest only in ultimate ends, — the ultimate truth, the ultimate beauty, the ultimate good. The universal human sigh is for God who is our home. The goal that is absolute is man's only resting-place. Augustine speaks for mankind when he says, Thou hast made us for thyself, and we cannot rest until we rest in thee. Life is a journey, and as every journey has before it some final end, so every reasonable man aims at some last and highest thing above and beyond all intermediate satisfactions.

What, then, is the last and highest satisfaction of man? What is the chief good, or summum bonum? That is the deepest and the most vital question that any one can ask. There have been many answers to it, as many answers as there are distinct types of human character. Plato said that the chief good is to be like God, but the Platonic God falls far below the God and Father of Christ. Plato's great successor said that excellence of being is the supreme thing in human good. But, again, what is the standard of this excellence? The Stoic held that conformity to nature is the

highest end of life; but what is nature? It is man's nature to grovel as well as to soar; it is the nature of the cosmos to chain him to vice as well as to incite him to fly toward the Divine. Epicurus stood for pleasure as the ultimate satisfaction; but there must be a discrimination among pleasures; all are not equally good. The Hebrew prophet declared that the righteous Lord is the goal of desire, but we wish to know what is meant by righteousness.

The Covenant of this church puts itself in line with the noblest wisdom of mankind, and it goes beyond it. It offers to the intellect and the conscience and the heart, as supreme good, the God and Father of Jesus Christ. The eternal truth of God's intelligence, the infinite righteousness of his conscience, the absolute love of his heart are offered as ultimate end, as everlasting satisfaction to the understanding and conscience and heart of man. Man's chief end is to glorify God, not the God of the Westminster Confession or Catechism, but the God and Father of Christ, and to enjoy him forever. Plato's longing for likeness to God is honored and carried beyond itself; Aristotle's silent pursuit of excellence is approved and informed by a perfect standard; the Stoic's hunger for conformity to nature is put under an interpretation that makes nature spiritual; the Epicurean desire for pleasure is transformed into the joy of

self-sacrifice. These schools of ancient thought have their permanent interest in the fact that they still represent the divisions and tendencies of the great human world. The idealist who is not a Christian; the scientist who is an idealist without religion; the moralist who seeks in vain an eternal standard of character; the lover of pleasure who goes by the force of his instincts, all are spoken to, all have their ends lifted into an infinite grace, and widened to an infinite expansion by the great words of the Covenant. Together we confess God the Father of Christ as our chief good. For us he is the end of life, the desire of all nations, the goal of history, the consummation of the universe.

2. But the Covenant does not stop here. It confesses a perfect way in adjustment to an infinite end. We confess "the Son of God as our Mediator, Head, and Lord;" we rely "upon him as the Prophet, Priest, and King of our salvation." Names mean little or much, according to the realities for which they stand. The word God is but a symbol. It means little or much, according to the reality that is seen behind it. Here lies the greatness of our Master. His greatness is bound up with the greatness of the God whom he mediates. He is the Mediator of our God; through his mind we get our best thought of the mind of God; through his love we reach

our highest idea of the heart of God; through his will we gain our sublimest vision of the Eternal character. Christ puts a new and an infinite meaning into the fundamental conception of faith. Behind the symbol, God, he discovers a Being of absolute love. When we call upon God, we call upon him in the name of Christ. It is Christ's God in whom we believe, whom we try to know; and the more we know the Son, the better we shall know the Father. Thus are God and Christ, the Father and the Son, the Absolute end and Perfect way bound together, and become inseparable.

Christ is our head because he is the representative and the guide of our humanity. His uniqueness lies in the fact that he alone discloses perfectly the tie that binds man to man and the race to God. In his perfect sonhood and brotherhood lie the supreme distinction and the universal and everlasting value of Christ's service. He is our Prophet; his mind is the ultimate mind about God and the life of man as the child of God. He is our Priest; his soul is alone great and pure enough to enable the world to live in the deepening consciousness of the Eternal compassions. Only his ineffable humanity, in life and in death, is strong enough to make men feel that God is love. The sympathy of Jesus Christ is inseparable from the pity of God. He is our King; and

we long to be under his authority. We believe that we are in the kingdom of God only when we are under the sovereignty of his life. All that the church has known and felt of Christ as the Prophet, Priest, and King of salvation, in our inmost hearts we believe and sacredly cherish.

3. To the Absolute end, and the Perfect way, the Covenant adds the Divine might. We confess the "Holy Spirit of God as our Sanctifier, Guide, and Comforter." We desire "to be a temple for him to dwell in." We seek the motive to the Divine life in the Divine indwelling. Ancient ethics when at their best are without an adequate standard of human good; Christian ethics when at their best, as in Christ, exhibit a perfect standard, and appeal to the heart with Divine power. What is our duty? Everything is not settled when we settle that question. Ye knew your duty, and ye did it not, is the device that explains the tragedy of mankind. We know, but we fail to do. We need the Father as end; we need the Son as Mediator; we need the Holy Spirit as Might. The unfledged eaglet sees its prey, it sees the path to it, but unwinged it cannot fly. That is the sad condition of mankind. For the most part it means to do well. It sees the good, it discerns the way to it, but somehow the mounting power is not there. Visions and dreams, sighs and tears, ineffectual longings and

unappeased desires make up the larger part of even the higher life of men. The world's sorest need is for an adequate motive. The race needs Christianity as thought, Christianity as feeling, and Christianity as power. It is religion as power that is the deepest necessity of the human soul. And the Holy Spirit is Christianity as the moral power of God. It is wings to the eager but impotent spirit. When it comes, the power arrives not only to see the chief good, but also to cleave the air and seize it. The due exercise of the intellect, the proper feelings of the heart, above all the victorious strength of the will, depend upon the Divine indwelling. The Holy Spirit is the trade-wind of the servant of God, the constant availing power for the man who sets himself to do his whole duty.

To us the Trinity is not a mere name. It is the sign for the whole appeal of God to man, and the whole answer of man to God. God the Father is the end; Christ the Son is the way; the Holy Spirit is the life that by that way comes to that end. The arrow has the mark toward which it is sent; it has the bow upon which it leans as means; and it has the impulse by which it is driven home. Our life is complete in God. We have the Father for end, the Son for way, the Holy Spirit for might. Our Covenant is the symbol of our life in this one God who is the

Eternal goal, the Perfect way, and the Divine motive of human existence. We are Trinitarians by tradition, but not by tradition only. We are Trinitarians by insight and conviction; we discern the threefold order of God's being, and we feel the threefold need of our humanity. The truth for which the word *Trinity* is a symbol, we believe to be the sum and substance of the gospel. We hear Christ say: "I am the way and the truth and the life;" and we understand him to present to the world in himself God as goal, God as path, and God as living might. In Christ we behold God as the Infinite Love by whom are all things, through whom are all things, and unto whom are all things.

Now that in Christianity we have the final religion for man, many persons seem to think that this leaves no room for progress. If the perfect has come, what can come after that? If the gospel is the ultimate truth about God and man and the divine universe, is it not foolishness to continue to speak of progress? The answer is that the contention that the perfect is here does not mean that it is perfectly understood. It may be admitted that the highest is among us, and still the claim may be made that endless progress is possible in the appreciation of it. Indeed, it is because we have the perfect in human society, it is owing to the fact that we possess the gospel of

God in Christ, that there is in our religion the eternal pledge of progress. The Infinite is here in our Christianity, and the ever deeper appreciation of it is but another name for progress. Since the days of Aristotle, the leading minds of the race have known that the world is round. But was the earth thoroughly known when its true form was demonstrated? Were the maps forever valid that were constructed upon this true basis? Why was it that Mercator's maps created an epoch? Why is it that even his maps have been rendered obsolete by later geographers? If the discovery of the sphericity of the earth meant the complete knowledge of it, this advance would have been impossible. But that great achievement was only the first step. It simply held up the total reality in outline, in general idea, in comprehensive form. Here was the real beginning of progress in the knowledge of the globe, and not the end. Columbus, Vespucius, Lope de Vega, Magellan, and hundreds of others only less distinguished, sailed off to put to fruitful and amazing test the great valid demonstration. The world must be known in detail. Maps are made through the verification of ideas in facts, and through the interpretation of facts by ideas. The world is still largely unknown. But a small part of the earth's surface has been accurately surveyed. The elevation of the greater Himalayan

peaks is still little better than guess-work. Thus we still wait for the scientific image of the full meaning of the ancient conception of the sphericity of the earth.

The same thing is true of Christianity. The wondrous divine reality is here. Its thought of Divine Fatherhood and human sonhood and brotherhood; its idea of eternal life; its conception of the kingdom of God; its whole sublime content set forth in parables and sermons that are the wonder of mankind, is here. As thought and as life, Christianity is completely here in the Divine character of the Master. But does any one pretend to know God as Jesus knew him, to think of man as Jesus thought of him, to compass his interpretation of the life of mankind, to possess completely his conception of the universe? The mind of Christ is the attraction and the despair of the highest spiritual genius. What the religion of Christ means to us and our contemporaries, what it has meant to the leading minds of the church in the successive centuries, one can set forth with some assurance and some approach to finality. But what Christ's religion meant to Christ himself, no sane mind will pretend to know, save in merest outline, and in the most inadequate way. The old theological maps had behind them the absoluteness of the gospel; the new theological maps have behind them

the same reality. But because the reality is the same, the maps are not therefore of equal value. Research, detailed divine discovery, wide and wondrous explorations, a new sense of magnitudes and relations, the results of a vaster receptivity, a profounder sorrow, a longer trial, and a larger blessing have rendered the old obsolete; and our assured hope is, that progress shall go on until something like an adequate scientific picture shall be gained of the full and glorious meaning of our faith. With the apostle we hope to know as we have been known. With him we are ready at any moment to forget the things that are behind, and to reach out to the things that are before, because this progress by oblivion of the past, as Robertson of Brighton calls it, leads only and always to one issue. It leads into the profounder and devouter appreciation of the faith that is the common possession of all the generations of Christian disciples, that God the Father was in Christ the Son, by the power of the Holy Spirit reconciling the world unto himself; the faith that the Gospel is the final revelation of God and the supreme blessedness of man.

THE ACTION OF THE CHURCH IN SETTING ASIDE THE WEST-MINSTER CONFESSION

MEETING OF THE DEACONS

During our membership in this church, we have heard more or less about a so-called "creed of the church," adopted in 1680, as a "confession of faith." The senior deacon was not asked in 1859, the year he united with this church, to subscribe to its tenets, or even to read it. It has never been produced, or even referred to, at any church committee meeting, to his knowledge or recollection, since 1858. It has been referred to only in general conversation.

Our attention has been called to these early New England "confessions of faith," by the late controversy at Andover, by frequent references to them in the discussions between the old and the new in religious thought, and very recently in the failure to install a candidate at the North Avenue Congregational Church in Cambridge.

It seemed desirable to us, as officers of the church, to examine this old creed, and then to compare views in conference. A meeting for that purpose was appointed for March 28. Four deacons were present. Deacons Covel and Garritt were away from home. After a few minutes' conversation, we found that there was entire agree-

ment in our views on the creed as a test of membership in our church. No one of us would be willing to subscribe to its declarations as a whole. We were not long in coming to a unanimous conclusion that it was high time for this church to take some formal and final action in regard to this creed. After deciding upon what course to pursue, which will be reported before the close of this meeting, we summoned the pastor. He had been asked if he could be subject to call during the evening, and he replied in the affirmative. No one of us had had any conversation with him on the object of our meeting. After he appeared and had asked, pleasantly, what the deacons had in prospect for him, we reported to him the purpose of our meeting and why we had summoned him. We asked for his approval of our decision in regard to the creed, and for advice or suggestion. He gave both. After a half hour's conference, we agreed upon the plan of procedure which will be outlined to you this evening. There will be no time for the pastor to give public expression of his views upon the action of the deacons of the church this evening. If he decides to make this creed and the resolutions presented this evening the subject of a morning discourse to his church and congregation, at this early hint of our wish, perhaps he will be able to preach such a discourse Sunday morning, April 30.

PREAMBLE AND RESOLUTIONS

Offered Friday evening, April 14, 1899, by the deacons of the Old South Church in Boston, for the action of the church at a subsequent meeting of its members, duly called for that purpose : —

Whereas, There is a confession of faith, generally known as the creed of the Old South Church in Boston, "owned and consented unto by the elders and messengers of the churches assembled at Boston, May 12, 1680, of which all its pastors since that time" (to the year 1854) "have been required to signify their approbation, previously to their admission to the church in preparation for their ordination or installation; and a profession of belief in the fundamental doctrines of which is received from candidates, and announced to the brethren, by the pastor, previous to admission to membership:"

And *Whereas*, This same creed was reinforced by a vote of the church, March 27, 1826 :

And *Whereas*, By a vote of the church, October 10, 1854, one thousand copies of this creed and the covenant of the church, with other subject matter, were ordered to be printed and that "each member of the church be entitled to a

copy; also that each pew proprietor, who is not a member, be furnished with a copy; and that the pastor furnish each candidate for membership with a copy, previous to a public profession: "

And *Whereas*, This order has been disregarded and consent to this confession of faith, or creed, has not been required as a test of membership to this church for nearly two generations, and only in one instance in the examination of a pastor-elect, — the Rev. Jacob M. Manning, D. D., — who refused assent to it in its entirety and expressed his dissent, in writing, to certain portions of it, and his reasons therefor:

Therefore *Resolved*, That this church, by formal vote of its members, both male and female, in meeting duly called by the clerk for this purpose, does hereby set aside this confession of faith, or creed, hereafter to be discontinued formally as it has been disregarded practically, as a test of membership in this church, and that assent to it be no longer required by applicants for admission to this church, nor by any pastor-elect.

Also *Resolved*, That hereafter the test of membership in this church shall be assent to the covenant used by this church, substantially in its present form, since its organization, in words as follows: —

CONFESSION AND COVENANT

The Lord Jesus Christ witnessed a good confession at the time when he said, "To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness to the truth." And he taketh notice of it, to the high praise and commendation of the church in Pergamos, that they held fast his name, and had not denied his faith. We find how ready the apostle was to make a confession of his faith, though for that hope's sake he was accused and put in chains. What hours of temptation may overtake you is not for us to say. Only the Lord doth many times so order things that, when his people have made a good confession, they should be put upon the trial, one way or another, to see whether they have been sincere in what they have done. The Lord grant that your mind minds may be so girt about with truth that you may be able to stand in the evil day, and, having done all, to stand.

CONFESSION.

You do now, in the presence of God, and before his holy angels, and this assembly, solemnly profess to give up yourself yourselves to God the Father as your chief good — to the Son of God as your Mediator, Head, and Lord, relying on him as the Prophet, Priest, and King of your salvation — to

the Holy Spirit of God as your Sanctifier, Guide, and Comforter, to be a temple for him to dwell in. You profess to give up yourself / yourselves to this one God, who is the Father and the Son and the Holy Ghost, in an everlasting covenant, to love, obey, and serve him forever.

Do you now make this confession?

COVENANT.

Having made this confession, you do furthermore promise to walk with us as a church of Christ, in due submission to, and attendance upon, all the orders and ordinances of the gospel; and that, by the help of the Spirit, you will adorn this your profession by a holy, blameless, fruitful life and conversation.

Do you now take upon you this covenant?

Receive, then, our Christian welcome. By the help of the same Spirit on whom you rely, we promise that we will carry it toward you as toward one / those brought up with us in the fellowship of the saints. We welcome you to the hopes, the labors, and the joys of this church of Christ. It shall be our concern to watch over you, not for your halting, but for your edification.

The Lord bless you and keep you;

The Lord make his face to shine upon you, and be gracious unto you;

The Lord lift up his countenance upon you, and give you peace. Amen.

Signed,

MOSES MERRILL,
R. H. STEARNS,
A. S. COVEL,
FRANK W. HUNT,
LUTHER A. WRIGHT,
WILLIAM B. GARRITT,

Deacons of the Old South Church, 1899.

MEETING OF THE CHURCH,

Friday Evening, April 28, 1899, *the Pastor, the Rev. George A. Gordon, D. D., presiding.*

THE meeting was opened by the singing of the hymn "The Church's one foundation is Jesus Christ the Lord." After the singing of the hymn, Dr. Gordon read a part of the 5th chapter of the Gospel according to Matthew. Then he offered the following

PRAYER:

O God Most High, exalted in the heaven of thy holiness forevermore, we bless thee that through the words of our great Master, Christ, we are brought into thy presence again; that we are enabled to feel how great and beautiful and wholly Divine his spirit and his teaching are; how glorious his gospel, how perfect his revelation of thee, how sublime his demand of the lives of his followers. For the height of it and the glory of it we render thee our heartfelt thanks. We rejoice that we belong to a perfect Father. We rejoice that we are the disciples of a Divine and incomprehensibly good Master; that the kingdom which he has revealed and founded is still so

immeasurably beyond our farthest thought and our noblest feeling.

O God, grant us to feel this to-night, — that the Eternal is all about us; that things unspeakable and inconceivable in their perfection and in their tenderness are in our glorious Christian faith. May the majesty and the pity of the gospel of Jesus Christ touch us all to-night with new power! May we feel called upon to speak with kinder tongues, and to live with more truthful hearts, and to walk in the ways of a more straightforward life, because we are overshadowed by such glory, and appealed to by such a spirit, and are held by so Divine a Lord!

Thou knowest the purpose of our hearts to-night, our Father! May it be consummated in all clearness of judgment, in all quietness of heart, in all elevation of spirit; and with one motive, and one motive only, — that the light that shines in the face of Jesus Christ may be unclouded in the Confession and Covenant of this church of God.

Grant unto all thy people this clearness, this calm, this high and sweet motive, and lead us to the issue of this gathering to the glory of God, and to the ripening of our own souls in faith and in hope and in love.

We ask it in our Lord's name. Amen.

After the singing of the hymn "Work, for the night is coming," Dr. Gordon said: The object of this meeting is to take action upon a report submitted in this place two weeks ago by the officers of the church, respecting the Creed — Confession of the Church — which was adopted in 1680, and remains until this hour unrepealed. I will ask the Clerk of the church to read the Preamble and the Resolutions with which that Report closed.

The Clerk, Mr. J. Converse Gray, then read the Preamble and Resolutions offered Friday evening, April 14, 1899, by the Deacons of the Old South Church in Boston, for the action of the church.

Dr. Moses Merrill then moved the adoption of the Preamble with the subjoined Resolutions as follows: —

I move the adoption of these Resolutions for the following reasons: —

First: Because the "Confession of Faith," or Creed, to which they relate is the Westminster Assembly's Confession, prepared in 1647, and is not accepted by any church in our denomination at the present time as the expression of its doctrinal belief.

Second: Because this Creed was formally adopted by this church in 1680, and practically reaffirmed at subsequent dates, even as late as 1854, and therefore stands, in the records of this

church, as the doctrinal belief of its members to-day, so far as any vote to the contrary is recorded.

Third: Because it will continue to be such until it is abrogated by formal vote.

Fourth: Because, in practice, it has been discarded, as a test of membership, for two generations, accepted only in part by Dr. Manning in 1857, and by the present pastor not at all.

Fifth: Because it would be really better and more honorable for our church to be without a creed than to have one founded on interpretations of Scripture in vogue nearly three hundred years ago, and which is not, and cannot be, accepted in the light of present scholarship, however imperfect the future may reveal that to be.

Sixth: Because we believe that this Creed, and others like it, have been the fruitful cause of schism in our churches and the principal cause of the defection from our denomination to others less strict in their theological tests; and have prevented many good men and women from identifying themselves with churches they preferred.

Seventh: Because I believe that most, if not all of you, would not have become members of this church had you been required to assent to the tenets of this "Confession of Faith" or Creed, as a test of admission. Desirous as you were to make a public declaration of your discipleship

and of consecration to the service of our Lord and Master, assent to this Creed would have been an insuperable obstacle.

The motion of Dr. Merrill was seconded by Mr. Edward C. Johnson and Mr. Moses W. Richardson, after which the subject was declared open for discussion.

Mr. Alpheus H. Hardy made the following remarks: —

Mr. HARDY: I have been for ten years or more in the atmosphere of creed discussion, and I have been taught to think soberly about a great many things. I may also add that I have grown in very many ways more conservative during this time; but of one thing I seem to feel assured, and that is that we are living under an inverted pyramid of creed development.

Now imagine for a moment Paul putting the Old South Creed to the jailer when he asked him what he should do to be saved! Is it possible to conceive it?

It seems time for the church to come out from under the shadow of this pyramid and get back to the Master, who preached a gospel which the poor received gladly, and who thanked his Father in Heaven that important, essential things were revealed unto babes and hid from the wise.

Now I say these things not because it is necessary at all to say them with regard to this vote

this evening, except for the fact that it may be an epoch-making vote. Unquestionably the act of the Old South to-night will go broadcast through the land. It will be in line with the Christian men who are working through this country everywhere. To bring the church away from the doctrines of the fathers to the teaching of Christ should be our constant endeavor, and to what end? To bring the church nearer to the people whom Christ reached, and among whom he mostly worked.

I was reading not long ago a book on "The New Far East." It commended the work of the missionaries, but it said, "The difficulty is, when you bring missionary work to the mind of a heathen, his first question is, "Which Christianity am I to adopt? which form of church worship? which set of doctrines?" If we could only get away from this elaboration of men to the pure teaching of Christ, then the Church would be a church in the world and for the world again. Then our missionaries will have many, many times the power they have now. There is a chance of Christian unity, and a brighter day will dawn for all men.

Deacon Richard H. Stearns made the following remarks: —

There is no doubt the Creed contains a great deal of truth, but it contains an immense amount

of error. And I wish to vote to-night, myself, to absolutely set it aside. And the more I think about it the more I am satisfied that the Confession we have here has gathered all that we need to state of our belief.

I am greatly interested in what Mr. Hardy has said. I have thought of it very much in the same way, — that as to this dogmatizing, to so great an extent, in reference to the things we are to believe, it is time it was set aside. Christ, in his life, in his teachings, and in his sacrifice, is our Creed. It is very simple and open to us all, and it does not seem necessary to dogmatize about these things to the extent that they have been dogmatized upon in the past. It is impossible to exalt Christ too much in the faith and devotion of his people. Every movement is good that sets him in the supreme place. To call the church back to him away from the dogmas of men can result only in good.

Mr. Merrill. Mr. Moderator, I hope it will not be presumptuous if I say one word to-night for an absent friend and brother. He knows nothing of my intention, and it might be regarded as presumptuous, but I have the cordial support of our pastor, the only person that I have consulted.

No one would have a better right — from his long association with this church, from the hearty

sympathy which he has expressed in word and action for all of the interests of this church from boyhood — than the person whom I have in mind. We exceedingly regret, as one of the deacons said just before we came in here, that he could not be present and speak upon this subject, and state his reasons in his own language, and the reminiscences which he could give us in support of these Resolutions.

We profoundly regret the absence this evening of Mr. Samuel Johnson, our friend and brother, detained at home by illness. He has manifested a deep interest in the report of the deacons made two weeks ago, and the recommendation suggested by that report.

If he were here, he would tell you in what distress of mind his mother, soon after she united with this church in 1836, went to her pastor, Dr. Blagden, with this printed Creed in her hands, and assured him that she should never have joined the church had she read the Creed before making her public profession. The pastor replied, "You joined this church by assenting to the 'Confession and Covenant.' Do not give the Creed another thought."

I have had Mr. Johnson's consent to state that incident, because when he related it to me on one occasion I asked him if I could use it, if I wished to do so at any time, and he said I could.

He would tell you of a lifelong friend, who gave every evidence of a Christian character in all social and business relations, but who declined an invitation to sit with him at the communion table of our Lord in a church which retained such a creed as ours.

It is possible that he might tell you that his own public profession of discipleship was delayed until he felt sure that assent to the Creed was not required, even by implication, as a test of membership.

He would tell you of his unalterable conviction that much of the defection from our denomination, during the century just closing, was due to the retention of similar creeds in our early churches.

If Mr. Johnson had accepted any of the early invitations, urgently extended to him, to become an officer in this church, he would to-night be the senior deacon, and as such he would have given his heartiest coöperation in making up the report presented April 14, and he would make an earnest appeal for your sympathy and active support in the acceptance of these resolutions.

Dr. Gordon. I am sure I express the sentiment of every member of this church, present and absent, when I thank Mr. Merrill for calling our thought to our absent brother and friend, and for voicing in a few words his interest in our gather-

ing, his sympathy with its purpose, and his desire that that purpose might be consummated.

The vote was then taken by ballot, and resulted in the adoption of the preamble and resolutions: 134 yeas; 6 nays.

Dr. Gordon then read the covenant upon which the church was founded in 1669, which is as follows: —

THE ORIGINAL COVENANT OF THE OLD SOUTH CHURCH IN BOSTON, TWELFTH DAY OF THE THIRD MONTH, 1669: —

We, whose names are underwritten, being called of God to join ourselves into a church, in heart-sense of our unworthiness thereof, disability thereunto, and aptness to forsake the Lord, cast off his government, and neglect our duty one to another, do, in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, trusting only in his grace and help, solemnly bind ourselves together as in the presence of God, constantly to walk together as a church of Christ, according to all those holy rules of God's Word given to a church body rightly established, so far as we already know them, or they shall be hereafter farther made known unto us.

And particularly we do first of all, according to the tenor of the everlasting covenant, give up ourselves and our offspring unto God, our chief,

yea, only good; unto our Lord Jesus Christ as the only Mediator, our only spotless Head and Lord, receiving and relying on him not only as our High Priest for satisfaction and intercession, but also our Prophet to teach, and our King to reign over us; and unto the Holy Spirit, to be a Temple to him, that by his dwelling and working in us we may have and be established in fellowship with God in Christ, one with another.

And for the furtherance of this blessed fellowship we do likewise promise to endeavor to establish among ourselves, and convey down to our posterity, all the holy truths and ordinances of the gospel committed to the churches in faith and observance; opposing to the utmost of our church-power whatever is diverse therefrom or contrary thereto.

Also we do give up ourselves to one another in the Lord, and by the will of God hereby promising to cleave one to another as fellow members of the same body, in brotherly love and holy watchfulness unto mutual edification in Christ Jesus; and to be subject in and for the Lord to all the administrations and censures of the congregation, so far as the same shall be ordered according to the rules of God's most holy Word.

And finally, we do hereby covenant and promise, through the help of the same grace, to hold, promote, and maintain fellowship and communion

with all the churches of saints, in all those holy ways of order appointed between them by our Lord Jesus, to the utmost, especially with those among whom the Lord hath set us; that the Lord may be one, and his Name one, in all these churches throughout all generations, to his eternal glory in Christ Jesus.

And now, the good Lord be merciful unto us, pardoning according to the greatness of his grace as all our past sins, so especially our church sins in negligence and unfaithfulness of former enjoyments; and accept as a sweet savor in Christ Jesus this our offering up of ourselves unto him in his work, filling this his house with his own glory, making us faithful to himself and one another according to himself, for his Holy Name's sake. Amen.

The whole congregation then rose and remained standing until the Confession and Covenant, now the sole symbol of the Old South Church, was read. The hymn, "Blest be the tie that binds our hearts in Christian love," was then sung, and the meeting was closed with the benediction.